

## Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 PM-04 SY-05 FAA-00 DOTE-00

MCT-01 L-03 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 COME-00 EUR-12

/050 W

-----092211Z 096382 /62

R 091421Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 3952

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ROME

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2183

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR LE ASEC

SUBJ: SECURITY SITUATION AT BEIRUT AIRPORT

REF: DAMASCUS 2738

1. WHILE SECURITY AT BEIRUT AIRPORT (BIA) IS BY NO MEANS PERFECT, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE SITUATION IS AS BAD AS REPORTED REFTEL. THE ARAB SECURITY FORCE HAS THE SECURITY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE AIRPORT PERIMETER AND ONLY LIMITED INTERNAL SECURITY RESPONSIBILITY, SUCH AS RUNWAY GUARDS, PLANE GUARDS. THE LEBANESE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES (AIRPORT SECURITY UNIT) HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SECURITY INSIDE AND IMMEDIATELY AROUND THE TERMINAL. THEY ARE ADMITTEDLY HAMPERED BY LACK OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS; NEVERTHELESS, THEY HAVE PREVENTED AT LEAST FOUR (4) ATTEMPTED AIRCRAFT BOARDINGS BY ARMED INDIVIDUALS SINCE LAST NOVEMBER AND APPREHENDED A PASSENGER ATTEMPTING TO SHIP TWO SUITCASES OF ARMS AND EXPLOSIVES IN HIS HOLD LUGGAGE.

2. RSO RECENTLY VISITED AMMAN AND CAIRO AIRPORTS AND,  
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IN HIS OPINION, THE PREDEPARTURE SECURITY CHECKS AT BIA, WHILE NOT AS GOOD AS AMMAN, ARE BETTER THAN CAIRO. OUR INFORMATION SUGGESTS THAT BIA'S SECURITY IS ON A PAR WITH DAMASCUS AIRPORT.

3. THE LOCATION OF THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS AND THE POTENTIAL AND ACTUAL DANGER THEY REPRESENT HAS NOT

LESSENER, BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT HAS SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED. THE FACT THAT MEA AND A GROWING NUMBER OF FOREIGN AIRLINES ARE ABLE TO OPERATE AT BIA SO FAR WITHOUT INCIDENT (KNOCK ON WOOD) CONFIRMS THIS. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT IT WAS NOT PALESTINIANS WHO CLOSED BIA DURING THE WAR, BUT RIGHTIST/CHRISTIAN GUNNERS IN THE HILLS EAST OF THE AIRPORT.

4. WHILE WE DO NOT MINIMIZE RISKS PRESENT AT BIA, WE CONSIDER THE STATEMENTS MADE BY SOURCE CITED REFTEL ARE AN OVERSTATEMENT. PAN AM'S RELUCTANCE TO RESUME SERVICE TO BEIRUT MAY ALSO BE AFFECTED BY UNCERTAIN STATUS OF USG-GOL CIVIL AIR NEGOTIATIONS.

5. INCIDENTALLY, MR. KHARAT IS STATION DIRECTOR FOR MIDDLE EAST AIRLINES (MEA), NOT THE BIA DIRECTOR. MR. EDMOND GHUSN IS THE BIA DIRECTOR.  
PARKER

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
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**Review Markings:**  
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